SOCIAL MOBILITY AMONG URBAN WOMEN
OF MALI COMMUNITY

ABSTRACT

Submitted for the award of degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
In the
Department of Anthropology
Faculty of Mental, Moral and Social Sciences
University of Pune

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University of Pune
Pune (INDIA)
2009
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Introduction:

Social mobility is a long range social and cultural change often regarded as leading to the progressive development of society with respect to time. According to the encyclopedia of sociology “Social mobility has been defined as movement through "social space" from one status category i.e. the origin to another status category i.e. the destination.

Dr. Kurane (1999:12,41) says “Social mobility is movement of a person or group from one social position to another with regards to education, occupation, status, income and power within a social space. It is a change in social object or values, attitudes, beliefs anything that has been created or modified by human activity. It changes a person’s overall position. Further she explains that social mobility occurs through various factors like education, occupation, participation in politics, urbanization, industrialization, emancipation of women, westernization and gradual modernization both in thought and external behavior.

According to Sethi (1976) social mobility brings structural changes in a social system related to changes in the attitudes and beliefs of the people. This leads to rationality, universality, and secular ideology which mean equality, freedom and independence for everyone.

According to Lip set & Zetterberg (1966:563) social mobility of an individual or group is determined by the shift and ranking of occupation, consumption, social power and social class. People’s beliefs, values, norms, customs and some of their emotional expressions are different according to their occupational class. The rate of mobility may differ in different dimensions. There is a possibility of having a higher rate of mobility in one dimension and lower in another.
For the present research the operational definition for social mobility means a positional change in the education, occupation, income and status of the individual. It means not only a change in material position, but it is also concerned with the participation in decision making and change in the inner state of mind and thought in each and every aspect of life.

Social mobility occurs through various factors such as education, occupation, industrialization, urbanization, Sanskritization, westernization, change in attitudes and beliefs towards different aspects of life and so on which all provide impetus for greater social mobility.

For the present investigation social mobility of Urban Mali women in Pune belonging to the Other Backward Castes (OBCs) is analyzed on the basis of the factors such as premarital and marital status, education, occupation, the extent of social participation, the extent of social distance between the Mali women and the upper castes, change in attitudes and beliefs towards institution of marriage, family, rites and rituals in religion, level of political participation and utilization of mass media.

Statement of problem:

In India women almost constitute half of the population. Women have been downtrodden and suppressed for centuries. The old traditional image of women has not changed completely. She had a low status and was deprived of all freedom and privileges. The dependence on her husband was not only of economic nature but extended to all other activities of women. Her feelings, values, and attitudes which form the basis of this dependence are by no means done away with till now. And the women of backward castes are more oppressed and depressed as they have to face different kinds of social problems such as the attitude of the parents, husbands and in-laws who by and large are traditional, orthodox and conventional.
Hence the aim of the present study is to find out the extent of social mobility among the Urban Mali women that are included in the other backward castes which have certainly been far behind culturally, socially, economically and educationally staying in Pune city.

Mali’s are not included among regular cultivators but are a lower group permitted to take up small waste plots adjoining the inhabited area and fertilized by its drainage. They still hold a lower rank than the ordinary cultivator. The word Mali is derived from the Sanskrit word mala meaning garland. They are an occupational group engaged in gardening and supplying flowers to Hindu temples. It seems that the gardening castes are not considered as landholders which in India are a status of a member in the village community. So far as ceremonial purity goes there is no difference between the Mali’s and the cultivating castes as Brahmins take water from both. The Mali are widely spread in Maharashtra, Gujarat, M. Pradesh, U. Pradesh, A. Pradesh, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa covering 89 districts of the country and having 260 segments. In Maharashtra the Mali’s live in Pune, Ahmednagar, Aurangabad, Parbhani and Nanded.

Today the Indian society is in a transitional stage. Due to increasing urbanization, industrialization, education, awareness, provision of opportunities and reservation policies women are being seen in all fields. This leads to a change in the traditional family role of the mother, which in turn affects the way the other family members perceive themselves and each other in relation. The process of education and employment of women presents the women with a vast range of attitudes, beliefs, values, behavior patterns and habits to choose from. They are more exposed to means of mass media and communication which all lead to her mobility.

The purpose of this study is to measure and analyze the social mobility of urban Mali women by focusing on their socio-economic background, their premarital and marital status; their educational and occupational mobility. The study has also tried to understand the attitudinal changes that have occurred in
different institutional areas such as marriage, family, rites and rituals in religion. It is required because the attitude of a person defines his/her role and makes his/her self-image. It, on the whole, influences his/her social action. The study has also tried to examine her extent of social participation, the extent of social distance with the upper castes, the level of political participation and the utilization of mass media among the Urban Mali women of Pune.

**Research Questions:**

The following research questions were explored using the concept of social mobility.

1. What is the socio-economic background of the Mali women?

2. What is the status of Mali women in her premarital family with regards to awareness of parental care and parental control in day to day activities?

3. What is the status of Mali women in the marital family with regards to decision making in the family and her opinion towards some traditional customs and practices in Indian society?

4. What is the Mali women’s attitude towards education and occupation and what is nature of educational and occupational mobility among the Mali women?

5. What is the Mali women’s extent of social participation?

6. What is the extent of social distance between the Mali women and upper castes?

7. What is their attitudinal change towards the institution of marriage and family?

8. What are the Mali women’s attitudes towards the rites and rituals in religion?

9. What is the attitude towards politics and the level of political participation among the Mali women?
10. What is the extent and purpose of utilization of mass media among the Mali women?

**Justification of the problem:**

The central problem is that women are not considered as independent persons. The fact of sex inequality needs to be taken into fuller account in measures and studies of mobility.

Today though women are getting educated, entering the work force and are seeking their identity as independent persons, but the old order is under strain and has been showing clearly cracks in its structure and functioning. Thus, the problem of position of women is very complex and it is fractured along the structured social inequalities in Indian society.

A number of studies have been made concerning the changing status and mobility of women in general and also studies have been done on scheduled caste women but the literature is practically devoid of enough substantive literature on the mobility of Other Backward Caste (OBCs) women and that also on Urban Mali women in particular. Social mobility of Urban Mali women of Pune belonging to OBC category remains comparatively an unexplored area. So the proposed study aims to explore the nature of social mobility in various aspects of the Urban Mali women in Pune.

The study would examine the social mobility of urban Mali women through focusing on number of factors of social mobility such as premarital and marital status, education, occupation, the extent of social participation, the extent of social distance with the upper castes, the level of political participation, and the utilization of mass media among the Mali women. The present study will also focus on the changing attitudes and beliefs towards institutional areas such as marriage, family, and rites and rituals in religion as these changes have a tremendous influence on society and its development which in turn affects the mobility of women.
Therefore, at the theoretical level, the investigation would help us in conceptual clarification of social mobility among the Mali women belonging to the OBC category in Indian society. At the practical level the investigation would also help us in understanding the Mali women’s position, mobility pattern and also in identifying the socio-cultural and behavioral changes among Mali women. An empirical research in such an area would be good contribution to the discipline of Socio-Cultural Anthropology particularly Urban Anthropology. The study would also help administrators and policy makers those who are engaged in women’s development area and it would also be a contribution to the community.

**Research methodology:**

Pune city was selected for the research as it is characterized by cultural, educational, military, religious and industrial centers. **Hadapsar, Wanavdi, Kasba peth, Bhavani peth and Pune station area** were the suburbs of Pune city which were **selected for the study.** Accordingly **382 women** of the households were **selected using the technique of proportionate random sampling.**

In the present study **quantitative and qualitative data was collected through pre-tested semi-structured interview schedule.** The purpose of adopting a qualitative and quantitative mix was to enhance the Anthropological understanding of the community. Also qualitative information was supplemented by **participant and non-participant observation.** To get the beliefs and attitudes of the respondents in detail, **interview schedule were employed in-group as well as personal interviews,** were the discussions were more informal in nature mainly aimed at collecting maximum qualitative information.

The **case study method was also employed** in the present study for thorough investigation and to understand the complex factors that are functioning within
a social unit. **Six case studies** were conducted in the present study were the cases had some unique ness.

**Conclusion:**

**Premarital status of Mali women:**

In premarital status of Mali women in the family, data regarding **awareness of parental care as compared to their brothers** reveals that almost all the respondents were loved equally, felt no partiality in allocation of food, majority were treated equally in case of a quarrel, majority didn’t get pocket money, had no birthday celebrations on a large scale but were celebrated in a simple manner, were not given a vehicle. While a negligible number of respondents were loved more and were favored more in case of quarrels, among some birthdays were celebrated equally, few were given equal pocket money and vehicle that can be said to be emerging trends. And a negligible number were discriminated with regards to love, food, pocket money, giving vehicle and in case of a fight, which shows that girls of the Mali community were discriminated in the pre marital family.

More than half of the respondents said that they got an equal opportunity in education as their brothers, but it is seen that no one is highly educated and education was not meant to take up a job, marriage was the first priority and were married off with incomplete education and then according to the wish of husband and in-laws they were supposed to do whatever they wanted to. Some of the respondents reported that they were discriminated as compared to their brothers in education as the parents felt that education is not useful for girls as they have to be married with dowry and so were married early which shows that parents were ready to spend on the son’s education but not on the girl's education. Also the fear that if the girl is highly educated she may not find a suitably educated boy in their community as educated boys are few in the Mali community prevented the parents from allowing the girls to go for higher education.
With regard to parent’s job aspiration for daughters, the data reveals that majority of the parents were traditional and marriage of the daughter was more important than a job. Very few parents wanted their daughters to take up a job for future security, to become teachers and very few wanted the daughters to become doctors, lawyers or engineers, that can said to be emerging trend. Security, tradition and community acceptance rather than economic gain, personality development, improvement in status are seen for women in case of career choices.

In premarital status of Mali women in the family, from the discussion on parental control in some day to day activities, it can be noticed that even today the girls from Mali community do not have freedom as almost all of the respondents were never allowed to move alone, to go for a movie with friends, from talking and making friends with boys, which shows that parents are still conventional, not liberal, and checked the movement of the daughters. But change can be seen as few respondents allowed girls to go for movies with friends were allowed to talk with boys and were allowed to move alone, and felt that girls should be made courageous to face today’s changing environment that is an emerging trend.

In addition to this regarding working before marriage almost all of them were not in service before marriage due to early marriage, incomplete education, due to family tradition and as they belonged to wealthy families. While some were in service before marriage out of which few did jobs to make use of education, to share the economic burden of parents and to be engaged till marriage, which is significant change though in few cases.

On the whole it is seen that the girl child is discriminated and treated unequally, there is rigid control over the girl’s movement and freedom because of fear of social disapproval and getting the girl married is the top priority than her education and career for the parents which shows that the Mali women in the present study have an unequal status in the premarital family. In the present study 25.5% respondents were married
between the age of 10 to 17 years and 32.7% between 18-20 years. This shows early marriage is still prevalent among Mali community.

Marital status of Mali women:

In marital status of Mali women in the family, the data on **women’s involvement in the decision making process in the family**, among slightly more than half of the respondents both husband and wife shopped for daily requirements. Among some of the respondents both husband and wife take decisions jointly regarding education of children, upbringing of the children, control of money matters and running of the household. But among some the in-laws also have a major say regarding control of money matters and running of the household. It is seen that though not all but among some of the respondents the women is now being accepted as a participant in certain decisions. But in cases of decisions such as major shopping for T.V. furniture, buying a house, investing money though the women is consulted it is the husband who takes the final decision. But when it comes to the kitchen management it is entirely the women’s duty among majority of the respondents irrespective of whether she is a working or non-working woman. It is also seen that the traditional attitude regarding daughter-in-law’s duties towards the family is still there. So it can be concluded that women is given powers in day to day activities of the house, but decisions about major things and financial matters are still male dominated. But the only optimistic side is that the women are consulted even if the final decision is not left to them.

Among some the husband assisted in shopping for daily items and among few the husband also shared the kitchen responsibility, and that is an emerging trend.

In marital status of Mali women in the family, data on **opinion on certain traditional customs and beliefs in Indian society** shows that majority of the respondents felt that their mother-in-laws attitude towards them was not good due to the less dowry brought by them, due to the attitude of superiority of the
mother-in-law. Among few of the respondents it is seen that the husband favored his parents and relatives in case of a conflict in the family and among some he takes a neutral stand or a balancing role but never confronted his parents, and the women have to compromise even if they are not at fault to keep peace in the house and feel frustrated at such times. With regards to taking meals more than half of the respondents had their food in the last after the children and male members have eaten their food, some had according to the situation, with all the family members or with their husbands.

Almost of the respondents wanted a son in the family if not the first time than the second time, and son preference was so much that few of them went for sex determination tests and ‘ayurvedic’ treatment. Few even expected a girl child for the first time and felt that the birth of the girl and a boy should be welcomed with equal happiness. They said that a girl is a ‘lakshmi’ according to our religion and even girls look after the parents nowadays which is significant change. Also majority of the respondents felt that marriage is very important and should take place at the right time and age as it gives status in the society and felt that even if the girls want to make a career they should get married first if a good proposal comes and can then decide upon their career, few of them were uncertain and said that it all depends on the situation at the time of marriage of their daughters, few felt that career is important for future security which can said to be promising changes in their attitudes.

Among almost all the respondents it was the parents, elders or relatives who made the choice of partners for them. Though almost all the respondents had no freedom in their own marriage in selecting their partners yet some of the respondents were ready to give freedom to their daughters in selecting their mate, but also said that the boy should be from their caste and said that though they are ready to give freedom they are helpless as everything depends on the husband and in-laws, while some of them were rational and said that it depends on the situation at that time, while nearly half of the respondents clearly told that they were not in favor of giving freedom to the daughter in selecting her
mate as they felt that they are not mature enough. Regarding the criteria for mate selection majority of the respondents gave topmost priority to caste, then family background, then occupation, income and then education of the boy. Even youngsters gave priority to caste as it gives identity; and felt it is difficult to adjust to other culture, due to society fear, and due to respect for parents. In the present study respondents were more educated than the husbands, 57 cases were there but were happy as they got married into wealthy families the boys well settled in business.

There were three exceptional cases were the respondents remained unmarried by choice to devote to their work, due to some bad incidents and felt that marriage brings limitations on one’s life and work.

In a nutshell it can be said that tradition still rules in decision making in the family, in the attitude towards the daughter-in-law, in case of conflict in the family, with regards to taking meals, son-preference, freedom to daughter in spouse selection, criteria for spouse selection were caste endogamy is strongly functional, marriage is given more importance than education and career and the respondents have low ambitions regarding career of their daughters in the Mali community. So it can be said that women has no important role and have an unequal status in the marital family.

Education and Educational mobility:

In the attitude towards education it is seen that almost all of the respondents feel that girls should be educated up to graduation or at the most up to post graduation, they wanted the girls to be educated but not for making a career and also felt that if the girl gets a good proposal in between her education she should be married and then she can do anything according to her husband and in-law's wish. Few of the respondents felt that girls should be given education according to their aptitude and interest and she can take maximum education,
moreover they also felt that girls should be given vocational education so that they get jobs and that is a significant change.

The **main reason to get educated** for almost all was to be self supporting in times of need, to lead a sound domestic life. They also felt that even after S.S.C one can do short courses to earn a little bit. For majority of the parent’s marriage was important and so the respondents were married early. Few of the respondents felt that girls should be educated to be financially independent as according to them there was no guarantee of anything nowadays, to get knowledge, and also due to their own interest and parent’s interest and that is an important change.

Almost all of the respondents were not ready to send their **daughters to hostels** as they felt that there is no one to supervise them, this shows that traditional attitude and restrictions’ regarding girls is still there and few were ready to send the daughters to hostels as they felt that that will be for her growth and success. Moreover they also said that girls should be trained in self defense right from young age so that they can face any situation, which can said to be an emerging trend. Few of the respondents said that they cannot take decision on this matter alone even if they feel that their daughters should go to hostels if they get a good opportunity. Thus we see that the sacred character of marriage, early marriage, dowry system, their perception of future roles as wives and mothers came in the way of higher education among Mali women.

Majority of the respondents feel that an **educated mother is a better mother** as she can help the child in his studies, guide him when needed and encourage in his all round development which is a positive change. Some of the respondents felt that a cultured mother who instills good values in her children and makes them better human beings is more important than an educated mother for the all round development of the child and felt that education is not the criteria to judge a mother. Though they feel that educated mother is a better
mother in actual practice it is seen that they don’t give much importance to girl's education.

Data on educational mobility indicates that the level of education is gradually increasing among the Mali women, majority of them don’t use their education to make a career. They are married first, and the husband’s and in-laws decide whether or not to take up a job or continue the studies. According to them a woman’s priority should be her house and children and if there is need and if the husband wishes then only she can take up a job or she can help in the family business, or do something from the house and earn a bit. One more thing which can be seen from the data is that majority of the respondents have done B.A, B.Com and a negligible number B.Sc. The data also reveals that nobody was pursuing education in foreign countries and even out of city. Only one respondent who is married in Pune in a wealthy family residing in a posh locality is continuing her second year of M.B.A in Bombay at her parent's house, she was married while doing her first year M.B.A and is just completing her degree and has no plans to take up a job as her husband’s family is too rich and think that if the daughter-in-law works it will harm their status in the community.

It can be concluded that Mali women have low aspirations regarding education and what ever level of education they take it is to perform traditional roles and to enable them to earn a living in case of misfortune and emergency. Overall it is seen that getting a girl married is of top priority.

Occupation and Occupational Mobility:

The data on attitude towards women’s employment, shows that majority of the respondents did not favor women’s employment and said that there were disadvantages of a job as women cannot pay full attention to the household duties. For them the family responsibility came first then their individual development. Some had positive views regarding employment of women, felt
that there are advantages of a job and said that if a woman earns she has economic independence, she becomes confident to face problems, she is not suppressed and doesn’t have to depend for small necessities on anyone, In the informal discussion with the unemployed respondents it was seen that few of them inwardly have an aspiration to work if it has flexible timings or some part time jobs if it didn’t hamper their family responsibilities.

In the **attitude towards type of occupation** it is seen that majority of the respondents felt that if women want to work they should work from home or help in the family business so that one can pay full attention to the family, some preferred teaching jobs as they felt it has status, less hours of work, long vacations and is not laborious and moreover one can pay full attention to the family and children. Few felt that part time jobs or some household business is good as one can do something without neglecting the family. Next in preference were bank and clerical jobs as they had regular timings and are not difficult jobs and are less strenuous. These jobs were last in preference as these jobs meant contact with men in offices. Very few of the respondents, felt that, girls can do any job which was suitable to their educational qualifications. It can be in the army, navy, police, administrative services, any field in which she has aptitude and interest which is a progressive change. A negligible number of respondents said that in a country where there is so much unemployment, men have greater right to job. So women should concentrate on their homes and use their education in managing the home and should try to do a little bit of something other than housework so that she has her own money and a sense of fulfillment.

The data on **reasons to take employment** shows that some of them have taken up jobs to contribute to the family income. While some were self-employed in very small scale business like tailoring, running beauty parlors, nursery, mess, taking tuitions, making pickles, ‘masalas’, ‘papads’ other than housework. Few respondents were helping in their family business like dairy, stationary shops, general stores, electric appliances shop, STD booths, Xerox
shop etc in their free time. All the self-employed and those helping in the family business said that because of this they could keep a balance between the role of a housewife and an employee. They said that instead of going out to work and neglecting the family, they felt it is better to help in their own family business or do something from home where there is no compulsion of work and timings. While few have taken jobs to have economic independence, to make use of their education, and it was the wish of their husbands/ in-laws/parents. In addition to this the data also reveals that few who were in jobs before marriage had given up the jobs due to family’s opposition and are now self employed. Few post graduates who had career plans had to give up their dreams due to opposition from family, get married to undergraduate boys and are now helping in the family business. Two unmarried respondents getting jobs were not allowed to take up jobs as the parents want them to get married first and then do anything according to their husbands and in-laws wish.

The data regarding **utilization of earnings** was put to the (15.7%) respondents working outside, to the self employed (18.1%) respondents and to the (8.1%) of the respondents helping in the family business in their free time. Out of the employed respondents, some of them contributed their salary to the family, few spent some amount for themselves and saved some amount for future plans, few handed their entire earnings to the husband/in-law’s. While out of the self employed respondents some of them contributed to the family income, few saved it for future plans, few handed their entire earnings to the husband/in-law’s and few spent some part of their earnings for their own requirements which shows that though few women are claiming their rights in controlling some part of their earnings. But at the same time it is seen that few of the respondents still have to hand over their earnings to their husbands and in-law’s and have to ask from them even for their small necessities which shows that male dominance still prevails in the Mali society and women have no control on their own earnings. While the respondents who helped in their family’s small scale businesses had no fixed amount as salary but had the freedom to spend on small household necessities when needed.
Regarding the **attitude of family members towards their employment** question was asked to those (15.7%) who were actually employed outside. The data shows that some of the respondent’s in-laws and husbands were satisfied with their being in work and few of the respondents told that their families were not satisfied and disliked their employment. The reasons for disapproval were; 2(.5%) the family was well off whereas; 3(.8%) the family felt that the respondent was not devoting her time for the family and that she has become disrespectful towards them. One respondent felt guilty for not giving attention to the children and also felt that the children were not doing well in studies and she left the job. Few felt that the husband and the in-laws have to be supportive if a woman wants to work. The question was not put to self employed (18.1%) and those (8.1%) helping in the family businesses, as such type of jobs are not time consuming, there is no compulsion of work, are not strenuous and with flexible timings one can balance the job and household duties very well. Thus it can be concluded that the traditional outlook that a woman should not work outside is still prevalent and hovering on the mentality of the husbands and their in-law’s in our respondent’s case.

In addition to this few of the respondents felt that no matter what a woman does, but it is important that every woman should have economic independence. Career for them meant a job or some work which can be done without neglecting the family which shows they are not highly ambitious. They said education is not meant only to make a career and can be used in many ways to lead a creative, productive and fruitful life. It proves that though the process of change is slow, that attitudes of these women are certainly changing. It can be said that there is an awakening and awareness among few of the respondents about economic independence.

It may be concluded that though economic need is the fundamental reason for those who were employed it is seen that majority were self employed and were helping in the family business which shows female employment outside the house is not widely accepted and the range of occupational choice for these
women is limited, the women themselves are not assertive and traditionalism still rules them. They also suffer from many obstacles such as opposition from family in taking up employment, due to less education and early marriage. Here it can be concluded that they are still bound by traditional hold of family and thus woman’s perception of employment is not free from the context of family. It may also be stated that since the Mali caste comprises traditional landowners, the hostile attitude towards women employment still remains.

Data on occupational mobility among the three generations shows that the Mali women have not achieved much vertical mobility on the occupational scale. However there is intergenerational horizontal occupational mobility as the number of respondents engaged in teaching, clerical jobs, self employed, those helping in family business show an increase from the first ascending to the second generation. While in the first descending generation also only one respondent is an officer rest are into teaching, clerical jobs, are self employed or are helping in the family business. In all only six cases of vertical mobility are seen and some respondents in the first descending generation are young and still studying, maybe they will get into other jobs. Even if educated they don’t use their education to make a career or to get employed. A woman’s priority is her house and children.

On the whole it is seen that Mali women have low aspirations regarding occupation, type of occupation, female employment outside the house is not widely accepted and the range of occupational choice for these women is limited due to many obstacles such as opposition from family in taking up employment, due to less education and early marriage. They are still bound by traditional hold of family and thus woman’s perception of employment is not free from the context of family. But among few there is awareness about economic independence.
Change in attitudes and beliefs:

Marriage:

In the **attitude towards marriage and performance of marriage** it is seen that almost all of them feel that marriage is a sacrament and the bond is forever and almost all felt that marriage should be performed with all religious formalities as it is a once in a lifetime affair and it gives a sacred feeling and security as it takes place in front of the ‘*samaj*’ people. Few of the respondents believed that marriage is a contract as today’s marriages are full of problems and couples break up on small things, and it is mostly the woman who has to bear a bad marriage mostly due to her economic dependence, society fear, children’s security and respect for her own parents. While few felt that marriage should be through registration as much should not be spent on marriage and the money can be used for some good purpose or to set the new couple or should be kept on the daughter’s name for her future security but these respondents also felt that some basic rites and rituals should be there along with the registration.

Almost all of the respondents preferred 18-25 as the **right marriageable age** for both boys and girls, few felt that the right age for marriage for boys should be between 25-30 years. While very few felt that the minimum age fixed for boys and girls by law should be increased to 22 for girls and 23 or 24 for boys as they are physically, mentally mature by this age and also have completed at least their graduation, that is a noteworthy change. A surprising point to be noted is that even in this modern times few of the elderly respondents felt that a girl should be married before 18 as according to them girls are getting spoilt by taking education, she can study further after marriage and in **actual it is seen that some 25.5% respondents were married between the age of 10 to 17 years and 32.7% between 18-20 years**. This shows early marriage is still prevalent among Mali community. Considering these facts the age specified for boys and girls in the present sample must be regarded as higher than the traditional customs.
Almost all the respondents held negative opinion towards the dowry system and felt that dowry is a social evil and causes many evils in society against women but they even said that even if one is against dowry they have to follow it as it is a custom of the society, for the security of the daughter and their status. The data also reveals that the girls themselves can bring a change by not marrying a boy who demands dowry and that is an emerging trend but here the girls had to settle for a less educated boy or leave their own jobs as demanded by the boy and his parents. It is also seen that educated girls do not get suitable educated boys and even if they get such proposals a huge dowry is demanded. Few of them favored the dowry custom and said that it is a tradition and dowry is for the daughter’s security and status in the in-law’s house but said that it should not be demanded and whatever is given should be accepted happily. In few cases the boy’s family demanded jewellery, furniture and a two wheeler from the respondent’s parents. Sometimes if the proposal is good the girl’s parents even take loans to give the demanded things. Thus it can be concluded that though dowry is not demanded directly a lot has to be spent by the girl’s family to make the bridegroom and his family happy. So it can be said that though almost all the respondents are against the practice of dowry, the custom of spending a large amount by the girl’s family for marriage is still a feature of Mali society and it is difficult to say whether in practice this system of spending a large amount on daughters marriage will continue or go away, and whether all those who spoke against dowry will actually practice it.

Almost all the respondents did not favor divorce as they felt that it is not in our culture, children suffer the most, sometimes woman resorts to divorce on small issues, and they said that after taking divorce the man is free for another marriage so to teach him a lesson one should not easily resort to divorce, also the divorcee has no status in society and may have problems in remarriage. So they suggested that the woman should try not to take divorce in any circumstances except in extreme cases. While few favored divorce as according to them a woman has a chance to get out of an unsuccessful marriage if the husband is unfaithful, mentally or physically defective, and
divorce gives equality to men and women, but they felt that divorce should be taken only in extreme cases when there is no other way. In all it can be said that whatever may be the reasons for troubles, divorce is not the way for the Mali women. Moreover the data shows that the men are free to marry without getting a divorce from the first wife and keep a number of wives to have a son or to have more children which clearly indicates the inferior status enjoyed by the women in the community.

Almost all the respondents were against widow remarriage as they thought that it is against our ‘shastras’, a widow will not have respect if she remarries, once married, a widow should not think of another man, she should stay with the in-laws working for them so that she gets respect in the society. The thinking that if she has a child from first marriage, then the second husband may ill-treat the child in upbringing also prohibited the widows from remarriage. And few of the respondents felt that even a widow has the right to rebuild her life and she should not suffer for no fault of hers, if she is young and desires to get married she should be married. Moreover they said that remarriage gives emotional, physical and social security. The data also shows that the families who are affluent, educated and staying in multi-ethnic areas readily go for widow remarriage while the poor and middle class staying in segregated localities among their own caste people do not go for widow remarriages.

**Family:**

The data on type of family shows that majority of the respondents preferred the joint family as it provided security, economic help when needed, controlled the husband and wife during conflict, helped in the proper upbringing of children and supported during big social responsibilities and in actual the data shows that majority (68.6%) of the respondents stay in joint families. While some of the respondents preferred nuclear family as they felt that joint family impedes the development of one’s personality, one has to adjust with many members in joint family, felt that joint family is harder for women and also said that nuclear family provides high standard of living with freedom and privacy.
So it can be concluded that attitudes towards marriage, performance of marriage, age of marriage, dowry, divorce, widow-remarriage and type of family are still traditional and hold an important place even under the influence of changing socio-cultural environment among the Mali women.

Rites and rituals in religion:

Data on the rites and rituals in religion shows that almost all the respondents believed in keeping fasts for the longevity of the husband, for security of children and out of faith and due to our tradition and said that it gives a good feeling. This shows the attachment of the women to their husbands and children and also in the religion, which they think, protects them. Negligible number of the respondents believed in keeping fasts for scientific reasons like to remain slim, for will control and to relax the digestive system which can be said as an emerging trend. While a negligible number of respondents had no belief in fasting as according to them one should have restricted and balanced diet and in case of sickness as one abstains from food the stomach gets rest naturally.

All the respondents visit the temple regularly, sometimes or only on festivals as they feel peaceful in the temple atmosphere that shows that the respondents are highly religious minded. A negligible number of respondents had no belief in visiting temples as one of them is an atheist and the other one feels that God is everywhere and one doesn’t need a special place or time to pray him, one should just do good deeds and that’s a progressive change.

The data shows that almost all of the respondents had a belief in taking bath in holy rivers just out of devotion as they felt that it purifies the soul, gives a sacred feeling, and not to wash away sins as it was believed earlier. Few of the respondents didn’t have belief in taking bath in holy rivers and they even felt that one can get skin diseases due to the dirty water and jokingly said that if washing sins is so easy then everyone will do wrong and go have a bath in the holy river.
In the belief towards offering sacrifice, it is seen that majority of the respondents had no belief in sacrifice as they felt that killing an animal is a crime while some believed in offering sacrifice to God as it was their tradition.

Majority of the respondents didn’t believe in rebirth and omens but some of the respondents believed in rebirth and omens which show that some of the Mali women under study are traditional and conservative in their outlook with no scientific thinking.

In the opinion of the respondents regarding belief in destiny shows that majority held the view that efforts and fate determine man’s destiny while some of the respondents were rational in their outlook and felt that man is the maker of his own destiny. While few of the respondents said that whatever a man does he cannot do anything in front of fate because fate determines everything in life.

Almost all the respondents were against the daughter performing funeral rites as according to them the tradition has come down from generations and going against it is not good as one has to stay in ‘samaj’ and in between the relatives which shows that tradition and religion still play a significant role regarding a daughter performing funeral rites. And some of the respondents agree that a daughter should be allowed to perform the last rites of parents as girls are seen in all fields nowadays. One even said that if a boy is good for nothing then a daughter should be allowed to do the last rites and one unmarried girl has decided to do her mother’s last rites come what may and can said to be a noteworthy change. But even those who have a positive opinion, out of them few said that they are scared to go against the tradition so it is difficult to say whether it will be put to practice.

When asked about the causes of diseases majority of the respondents said that diseases are caused due to germs, virus, bacteria and some said that diseases are caused due to unhealthy habits and few said that a man’s bad deeds from his earlier life and the present life are responsible for the diseases
he gets. Nearly half said that in case of sickness they immediately went to the doctor and more than half of them said that during sickness they first tried home remedies and if it didn’t get better then they went to the doctor.

So it can be concluded that mobility in attitudes regarding the rites and rituals in religion such as fasting, visiting temples, in taking bath in holy rivers, belief in destiny, daughter performing funeral rites and in getting treatment for sickness is not much and the Mali women are highly conservative, religious and traditional in their outlook.

Extent of social participation:

Data regarding the extent of social participation of Mali women shows that that almost all of the respondents never visited their friend’s house alone, they visited them with husband or with family members, almost all the respondents do not participate in picnics or parties with their friends and were not free to talk or make friendship with the opposite sex as the respondents themselves didn’t like it, due to fear of in-laws, husband and family members and also due to non-approval of parents. While few of the respondents participated in picnics or parties with their own friend with or without their children and were free to make friendship with the opposite sex.

Almost all were not members of any organization, only few were members in organizations and were involved in activities such as arranging lectures on social issues, health issues, creating awareness, inculcating the habit of reading among women, and helping women to be self dependent, arranging for ‘Haldi-kumkum’ even for widows, giving knowledge on AIDS, alcoholism, superstitions through plays, arranging ‘Bhajans’, visits to religious places and so on which shows though very few cases, that attitudes are changing, that is a significant change.

Hence on the whole it may be inferred that traditional attitudes regarding social life of woman still persists as far as visiting friends, participating in picnics and parties, talking with the opposite sex and participation in
organizations is concerned among the Mali community. This may be due to the fact that their movement outside home and participation in public life is controlled by elderly members or husband in the family and also due to their own conservative nature.

**Extent of social distance:**

The data on *extent of social distance of Mali women with the upper castes* reveals that almost all of the respondents had no friendship with the upper castes so there was no question of inter dining, they never attended any of their ceremonies, and said that they are happy in their own caste people and stay among their own caste people. And felt that the upper castes have a superiority complex. Though some of them talked to them they were not close to them due to some bad experiences. While few of the respondents had friends from the upper caste, they dined with them, attended their marriage, birthday, naming ceremonies and ‘puja’s’ and the upper castes also reciprocated in the same way and also said that they never felt discriminated by the upper castes on account of their own caste. These can said to be positive attitudinal changes.

Almost all the respondents were in favor of the *caste system* as according to them caste gives them an identity, but they also felt that though caste is important for marriages but they were against the casteism and hierarchy in the caste system.

Regarding *inter caste marriages* the data shows that almost all of the respondents were against inter caste marriages as they felt that due to cultural differences the girl has to adjust more and also reported that such marriages are not successful. Few felt that caste should not be there as caste is a man made system and also felt that caste has no role to play either in the social or political life and felt that inter caste marriages will reduce caste discriminations, will lead to casteless society and eventually lead to development of the society which are notable and promising changes.
It is also seen that the respondents families prefer boys of upper castes for inter caste marriages but when the boy is from the lower caste they break relations with the daughter as they feel that they lose their status in the community. One more point to be noted is that the well to do families staying in cosmopolitan localities accepted their daughters inter caste marriages after initial opposition, but it is seen that the middle class families staying in segregated localities with the same caste people were not happy with their daughter’s inter caste marriages. And even now there is no contact between the families. It is also seen that there is not a single case of inter caste marriage among the mother respondents but five inter caste marriages among the respondents daughter’s out of which, one is hyper gamy and four are hypogamous. So it can be concluded that there is not much mobility in the attitude towards inter caste marriages.

Thus it can be said that the Mali’s women’s opinions regarding friendship, inter dining and attending ceremonies of the upper caste and also attitudes regarding caste and inter caste marriages still show traditional orientation.

Political participation:

In political participation the data indicates that almost all women under study participated in voting which is a significant change. They are also aware that each vote is important as it decides the fate of a party. Few of the respondents did not vote in the last elections as they were not in town and few of the respondents were indifferent and did not vote as they felt that all political parties instead of working for the people have their own selfish motives and make false promises which are never fulfilled.

The data regarding participation in political activities shows that some of the respondents took part in canvassing; they distributed pamphlets during elections, and convinced others also to join to support their candidate as few were related to the corporator from their ward and few from another ward
helped another corporator as she was their friend. Few of the respondents took part in political meetings and agitations, but it was seen that these few respondents had a political background. These respondents said that they arranged meetings during elections to create political awareness among the people. They also took part in agitations to show their unity and support to their leader and to press for their demands. One interesting finding is that almost all the respondents exercised their voting rights but when it comes to actual participation in politics they are not so interested as they feel that politics is not meant for women and think that it will harm their status and their family’s status if they go for canvassing or meetings or agitations. They feel that if one wants to serve the nation there are many other ways to serve the society rather than politics.

In addition, the study also shows that almost all of the respondents felt that increased women’s participation in politics will not bring qualitative change in administration, as before elections the candidates make false promises never to be fulfilled; once they get power they become selfish. They also said that the main decision makers are men; moreover as politics is an unclean field, when a woman enters politics her image is tarnished so politics is not the field for women. And some of the respondents felt that qualities such as warmth, tolerance and sensitiveness in women will lead to less corruption, women’s problems will be solved, and will raise the status of women. While few of the respondents felt that, the nation’s welfare is not in the hands of politicians but on individuals whether men or women with principles and devotion to work.

The data reveals that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that there should be 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies to bring equality and for empowerment. Some even said that the reservation should be 50% as according to them this will bring fast improvement in the status of women as they have been an oppressed lot and unless and until more or equal number of women as men are at the decision making levels the status of women will remain same. They felt that a woman understands a woman’s problem and
once a woman comes to power she should be allowed to take independent decisions without any pressure. While negligible of the respondents felt that there should be no 33% reservation for women in legislative bodies and they feel that by asking reservation, women are proving that they are weak and inferior. They also felt that the women who are elected through reservation are just puppets taking orders from the male members. Some felt that an honest person should be at the helm of affairs irrespective of sex as it is seen that even women become selfish once they enter politics. Few were uncertain on this matter and did not give a definite reply.

Almost all of the respondents did not agree with the legislation giving equal rights to daughters over father's property, they felt that it depends on the situation and only if the daughter is in need she should be helped as a lot has to be spent on her marriage and dowry and that she gets the share from the husbands side also. They also felt that fighting over the property spoils the relation between the brother and sister and she should accept happily whatever is given instead of asking for equal property rights. Few of the respondents favored the present legislation giving equal rights to women in father’s property and said that as a legal inherent the daughter should be given her share of property. Few even said that it depends on the parent’s wish and if the daughter asks for equal property, she should take equal responsibility of the parents, also share the liabilities of the brothers if there are any and should be ready to take care of the family business even after marriage as running a business means a lot of stress and headache.

On the whole it can be said that Mali women are doubtful about the success of women’s participation in politics due to traditional values, domestic responsibilities, lack of time, lack of interest, fear of losing status in society, restrictions imposed by the family members on one hand and due to increasing use of money, muscle power and corruption in politics on the other hand. Regarding equal property rights also almost
all were against it which shows the inferior position of women in the Mali community.

**Utilization of mass media:**

In utilization of mass media, the analysis shows that nearly half of the respondents under study read *newspaper* regularly. Some of them read sometimes and some of them read rarely and said that they get to know about the different happenings through family or friends or T.V. Some of the respondents never read newspapers as few of them were illiterate and the others were not interested but they watched T.V. for news. A negligible number said that they get headache early in the morning as the newspaper has all cases of robbery, crime, rape and corruption so they prefer not to read newspaper but automatically they came to know the news through T.V. channels and the family members later on.

Almost all the respondents said that they watched T.V. Out of these; almost all of the respondents watched T.V. regularly, while few of them watched T.V. occasionally. Negligible of them never watched, as they didn't have a T.V. Almost all the respondents said that they liked to watch any entertaining programs and serials, and few of them watched news and educational programs. And few of them watched religious programs. Thus it can be concluded that almost all used T.V. for entertainment purpose and very few watched it for educative purpose.

The data also shows that almost all the respondents watched *movies* and most of them liked non-violent family oriented movies, few of them watched comedy movies, few of them liked to watch romantic/suspense movies, few of them watched old movies, few watched educational movies and few of them who were elderly liked to watch religious movies. Few said that as going out for movies is costly they watch movies by getting CDs or on TV. Few felt that due to multiplexes movie watching experience is totally different and one feels
relaxed. Thus it can be said that almost all the respondents watch movies and they like family oriented and entertaining movies.

Almost all the respondents never used computers. Only few of the respondents used computers for getting information, for storing data and for communication purpose, they felt that computers have made the work easier, but the internet is affecting the youngsters badly as some of them are misusing it for wrong purposes. One respondent felt that people used to work without computers in the past but now man is becoming a dependent on machines. So except very few, rest of the respondents, were not aware of computers.

Thus it can be concluded that though the Mali women utilize means of mass media such as newspaper, T.V. and movies, most of them use it for entertainment purpose and not for educative or awareness purpose. And use of computers and internet is still not very popular among them. Therefore the effect of mass media is not much on the Mali women, living in the research localities.

Case – studies:

Coming to the six case studies it is seen that the respondents show mobility and progressive attitudes in some areas, but the same respondents are tradition oriented and have conservative attitudes in some aspects. So it can be said that the respondents will take time to come out of the traditional outlook but it is clear that they are in the process of mobility.

In the light of above discussions it can be concluded that the urban Mali women of this study are traditional, conservative and orthodox in their outlook. The persistence of traditional outlook is quite evident from their responses, as can be seen by her unequal status in the premarital and marital family, by not having equal decision making powers in the family, by showing a positive attitude towards some traditional customs and beliefs in Indian society, having low aspirations and ambitions towards education and employment but have slight awareness regarding
economic independence. On the whole their attitude towards extent of social participation, extent of social distance, association with different organizations, marriage, inter caste marriage, type of family, their participation in politics, their religious views, utilization of mass media lead to the conclusion that there is no change in the attitudes but slight awareness is seen among few of the respondents.

Thus it can be concluded that though the process of mobility among Urban Mali women is slow, but the process of change has set in and she is passing through the transitional period. And since a slight awareness is seen among few of them it can help them to achieve social mobility in future.